

A
DISSERTATION
CONCERNING
GOD'S COMMAND
TO
ABRAHAM,

To offer up

ISAAC his SON for a SACRIFICE.

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A
DISSERTATION

Concerning
GOD's Command to *Abraham*,
to offer up *Isaac* his Son for a
Sacrifice.



SINCE this Command of God to *Abraham* * has of late been greatly mistaken by some, who venture to Reason about very antient Facts, from very modern Notions; and this without a due Regard to either the Customs, or Opinions, or Circumstan-

* Gen. xxii.

ces of the Times whereto those Facts belong; or indeed to the true Reasons of the Facts themselves: Since the Mistakes about those Customs, Opinions, Circumstances, and Reasons have of late so far prevailed, that the very same Action of *Abraham's*, which was so celebrated by *St. Paul*^b, *St. James*, the Author to the *Hebrews*^c, *Philo*^d, and *Josephus*^e in the first Century, and by innumerable others since, as an uncommon Instance of signal Virtue, of heroick Faith in God, and Piety towards him; nay, is in the sacred^f History highly commended by the Divine *Angel of the Covenant*, in the Name of God himself, and promised to be plentifully rewarded; since this Command, I say, is now at last in the xviiith Century, become a *Stone of Stumbling, and a Rock of Offence* amongst us, and that sometimes to persons of otherwise good Sense, and of a religious Disposition of Mind also; I shall endea-

^b Rom. iv. 16—25.

^c Jam. ii. 21, 22.

^d Heb. xi. 17, 18, 19.

^e Phil. de Gyant. p. 294. de Abraham, p. 373—377.

Jos. Antiq. l. 13.

^f Gen. xxii. 15—18.

your to set this Matter in its true, *i. e.* in its antient and original Light, for the Satisfaction of the Inquisitive. In order whereto we are to consider,

(1.) THAT till this very profane Age, it has been, I think, universally allow'd by all sober Persons, who owned themselves the Creatures of God, that the Creator has a just Right over all his rational Creatures, to produce their Lives to what length he pleases; to cut them off when and by what Instruments he pleases; to afflict them with what Sickneses he pleases; and to remove them from one State or Place in this his great Palace of the Universe to another, as he pleases; and that all those rational Creatures are bound in Duty and Interest to acquiesce under the divine Disposal, and to resign themselves up to the good Providence of God in all such his Dispensations towards them. I do not mean to intimate, that God may, or ever does act in these Cases after a meer arbitrary Manner, or without sufficient Reason; believing, according to the whole Tenor of natural and revealed Religion,

ligion, that he *hateth nothing that he hath made*^g, that whatsoever he does, how melancholy soever it may appear at first sight to us, is really intended for the Good of his Creatures, and at the Upshot of Things, will fully appear so to be; but that still he is not obliged, nor does in general give his Creatures an Account of the particular Reasons of such his Dispensations towards them immediately; but usually tries and exercises their Faith and Patience, their Resignation and Obedience, in their present State of Probation; and reserves those Reasons to the last Day, the *Day of the Revelation of the righteous Judgment of God*^h.

(2.) THAT the intire History of the past Ages, from the Days of *Adam* till now, shews, that Almighty God has ever exercised this Power over Mankind; and that without giving them an immediate Account of the Reasons of such his Conduct; and that withal the best and wisest Men in all Ages, *Heathens* as well as *Jews*,

^g Wisd. xi. 24.

^h Rom. ii. 5.

and *Christians*; *Marcus Antoninus*, as well as the Patriarch *Abraham*, and *St. Paul*, have ever humbly submitted themselves to this Conduct of the divine Providence; and always confessed that they were obliged to the undeserved Goodness and Mercy of God for every Enjoyment, but could not demand any of them of his Justice; no not so much as the Continuance of that Life whereto those Enjoyments do appertain. When God was pleased to sweep the wicked Race of Men away by a Flood; the young innocent Infants, as well as the guilty old Sinners; when he was pleased to shorten the Lives of Men after the Flood, and still downward till the Days of *David* and *Solomon*; when he was pleased to destroy impure *Sodom* and *Gomorrha* by Fire and Brimstone from Heaven, and to extirpate the main Body of the *Amorites* out of the Land of *Canaan*, as soon as *their Iniquities were full*ⁱ; and in these several Instances included the young innocent Infants, together with the old hardened Sinners; when God was

ⁱ Gen. xv. 16.

pleased to send an Angel, and by him to destroy 185000 *Affyrians* (the Number attested to by ^k *Berosus* the *Chaldean*, as well as by our own Bibles) in the Days of *Hezekiab*; most of which seem to have had no other peculiar guilt upon them, than that common to Soldiers in War, of obeying, without reserve, their King *Senacherib*, his Generals and Captains; and when at the Plague of *Athens*, or of *London*, or of *Marseilles*, &c. so many thousand righteous Men and Women, with innocent Babes, were swept away on a sudden by a fatal Contagion; I do not remember that sober Men have complained that God dealt *unjustly* with such his Creatures, in those to us seemingly severe Dispensations. Nor are we certain when any such seemingly severe Dispensations are really such; nor do we know but shortening the Lives of Men may sometimes be the greatest Blessing to them, and prevent or put a stop to those Courses of gross Wickedness which might bring them to greater Misery in the World to come. Nor is it indeed fit

* Authent. Rec. pag, 865, 866.

for such poor, weak and ignorant Creatures as we are, in the present State, to call our Almighty, and All-wise, and All-good Creator and Benefactor to an Account, upon any such Occasions: Since we cannot but acknowledge, that it is *he that hath made us, and not we our selves*¹; that we are nothing, and have nothing of our selves, independent on him; but that all we are, all we have, and all we hope for, is derived from him, from his free and undeserved Bounty; which therefore he may justly take from us in what way soever, and whensoever he pleases. All wise and good Men still saying in such Cases with the pious *Psalmist*, xxxix. 9. *I was dumb, I opened not my Mouth, because thou didst it; and with patient Job* i. 21. ii. 10. *Shall we receive Good at the Hand of God, and shall not we receive Evil? The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; Blessed be the Name of the Lord.* If therefore this shortening or taking away the Lives of Men be an Objection against any Divine Command for that purpose, it is full as strong against the

¹ Ps. c. 3.

present System of the World; against the Conduct of Divine Providence in general; and against natural Religion; which is founded on the Justice of that Providence; and is no way peculiar to revealed Religion, or to the Fact of *Abraham* now before us. Nor is this Case much different from what was soon after the Days of *Abraham* thoroughly settled, after *Job's* and his Friends Debates, by the Inspiration of *Elihu*, and the Determination of God himself; as I shall shew in my Exposition of that most antient Book. Where the Divine Providence was at length thoroughly cleared and justified before all the World: as it will be, no Question, more generally cleared and justified at the final Judgment.

(3.) THAT, till this profane Age, it has also, I think, been universally allow'd by all sober Men, that a Command of God, when sufficiently made known to be so, is abundant Authority for the taking away the Life of any Person whomsoever. I doubt both ancient and modern Princes, Generals of Armies, and Judges, even those

those of the best Reputation also, have ventured to take many Mens Lives away upon much less Authority. Nor indeed do the most sceptical of the Moderns care to deny this Authority directly. They rather take a Method of objecting somewhat more plausible, tho' it amount to much the same: They say, that the apparent Disagreement of any Command to the moral Attributes of God, such as this of the Slaughter of an own Child seems plainly to be, will be a greater Evidence that such a Command does not come from God, than any pretended Revelation can be that it does. But as to this Matter, altho' divine Revelations have now so long ceased, that we are not well acquainted with the Manner of conveying such Revelations with Certainty to Men; and by Consequence the apparent Disagreement of a Command with the moral Attributes of God ought at present, generally, if not constantly, to deter Men from acting upon such a pretended Revelation; yet was there no such Uncertainty in the Days of the old Prophets of God, or of *Abraham*,
the

*the Friend of God*ⁿ; who are ever found to have had an entire Certainty of those their Revelations. And what evidently shews they were not deceived is this, that the Events and Consequences of Things afterward always corresponded, and secured them of the Truth of such divine Revelations. Thus the first miraculous Voice from Heaven^o, calling to *Abraham* not to execute this Command; and the Performance of those eminent Promises made by the second Voice^p on account of his Obedience to that Command, are Demonstrations that *Abraham's* Commission for what he did was truly Divine; and are an entire Justification of his Conduct in this Matter. The Words of the first Voice from Heaven will come hereafter to be set down in a fitter Place: But the glorious Promises made to *Abraham's* Obedience by the second Voice must here be produc'd from v. 15, 16, 17, 18. *And the Angel of the Lord called unto Abraham out of Heaven the second Time, and said, By my self have I sworn, saith the Lord, for because*

ⁿ Isa. xli. 8. Jam. ii. 23. ^o Gen. xxii. 11, 12.
^p v. 17, 18.

thou hast done this Thing, and hast not withheld thy Son, thine only Son from me; that in blessing I will bless thee; and in multiplying I will multiply thy Seed as the Stars of Heaven, and as the Sand which is upon the Sea Shore; and thy Seed shall possess the Gate of his Enemies. And in thy Seed shall all the Nations of the Earth be blessed, because thou hast obeyed my Voice. Every one of which Promises have been eminently fulfilled: And, what is chiefly remarkable, the last and principal of them, that *In Abraham's SEED all the Nations of the Earth should be blessed*, was never promised till this Time. It had been twice promised him, xii. 3. and xviii. 18. that *in himself should all the Families of the Earth be blessed*: But that this Blessing was to belong to future Times, and to be bestowed by the Means of one of his late Posterity, the Messias, that great Seed and Son of *Abraham*, only, was never reveal'd before; but on such an amazing Instance of his Faith and Obedience as was this his Readiness to offer up his only begotten Son *Isaac*, was now first promised, and has been long ago performed, in the Birth of

Jesus

*Jesus of Nazareth, the Son of David, the Son of Abraham*¹, which highly deserves our Observation in this Place. Nor can we suppose that any Thing else than clear Conviction that this Command came from God, could induce so good a Man, and so tender a Father as *Abraham* was, to sacrifice his own beloved Son; and to lose thereby all the Comfort he received from him at present; and all the Expectation he had of a numerous and happy Posterity from him hereafter.

(4.) THAT long before the Days of *Abraham*, the Dæmons or Heathen Gods had required and received human Sacrifices, and particularly that of the Offerer's own Children; and this both before and after the Deluge. This Practice had been indeed so long left off in *Egypt*, and the Custom of sacrificing Animals there was confin'd to so few kinds in the Days of *Herodotus*, that he would not believe they had ever offered human Sacrifices at all. For he says², " That the Fable, as if *Her-*

¹ Matt. i. 1.

² Ap. Marsh. Chron. pag. 303.

“ cules was sacrificed to *Jupiter* in *Egypt*,
 “ was feigned by the *Greeks*; who were
 “ entirely unacquainted with the Nature
 “ of the *Egyptians*, and their Laws. For
 “ how should they sacrifice Men, with
 “ whom it is unlawful to sacrifice any
 “ brute Beast? (Boars, and Bulls, and pure
 “ Calves, and Ganders only excepted.)”
 However, it is evident from *Sanchoiatho*,
Manetho, *Pausanias*, *Diodorus Siculus*, *Philo*,
Plutarch and *Porphyry*, that such Sa-
 crifices were frequent both in *Phœnicia*
 and *Egypt*, and that long before the Days
 of *Abraham*, as Sir *John Marsham* and
 Bishop *Cumberland* have fully proved.
 Nay, that in other Places, (though not in
Egypt,) this cruel Practice continued long
 after *Abraham*, and this till the very third,
 if not also to the fifth Century of Christia-
 nity, before it was quite abolished. Take
 the Words of the original Authors in *Eng-
 lish*, as most of them occur in their Ori-
 ginals in Sir *John Marsham's Chronicon*,
 pag. 76, 77, 78, 300 — 304.

“ CRONUS † offered up his only begotten

† Philo. Byb. ex Sanchoi. pag. Marsh. 76.

“ Son,

“ Son, as a Burnt-Offering, to his Father
 “ *Ouranus*, when there was a Famine and
 “ a Pestilence.”

“ *CRONUS*, whom the *Phœnicians* name
 “ *Israel* [it should be *Il*,] and who was
 “ after his Death consecrated into the
 “ Star *Saturn*; when he was King of the
 “ Countrey, and had by a Nymph of that
 “ Countrey, named *Anobret*, an only be-
 “ gotten Son, whom, on that Account
 “ they called *Jeud*, (the *Phœnicians* to
 “ this Day calling an only begotten Son
 “ by that Name;) he, in his Dread of
 “ very great Dangers that lay upon the
 “ Countrey from War, adorned his Son
 “ with Royal Apparel, and built an Altar,
 “ and offered him in Sacrifice?

“ The *Phœnicians*, when they were in
 “ great Dangers by War, by Famine, or by
 “ Pestilence, sacrificed to *Saturn* one of the
 “ dearest of their People, whom they chose
 “ by publick Suffrage for that Purpose.
 “ And *Sanchoniatho's Phœnician History* is
 “ full of such Sacrifices? [These hitherto

* Philo Byb. ex Sanchon. pag. Marsh. 76, 77.

* Porphyry. pag. 77.

I take to have been before the Flood.]

“ In *Arabia*, the *Dumatii* sacrificed a
“ Child every Year.” ”

“ * They relate that of old the [*Egyptian*]
“ Kings sacrificed such Men as were
“ of the same Colour with *Typho*, at the
“ Sepulchre of *Osiris*.”

“ † *Manetbo* relates, that they burnt *Ty-*
“ *phonean* Men alive in the City *Iditbyia*,
“ [or *Ilitbyia*:] and scattered their Ashes
“ like Chaff that is winnowed: And this
“ was done publickly, and at a set Season,
“ in the Dog-Days.”

“ * The barbarous Nations did a long
“ Time admit of the Slaughter of Chil-
“ dren, as of an holy Practice, and ac-
“ ceptable to the Gods. — And this
“ Thing both private Persons, and Kings,
“ and entire Nations practise at proper
“ Seasons.

“ * The human Sacrifices that were en-

* Porphyry, pag. 77. * Diodor. pag. 78. † Plu-
tarch. pag. 78. * Nonnulli ap. Pnilon. pag. 76. * Curr.
berl. Sanchon. pag. 378.

“ joined by the *Dodonæan* Oracle, men-
 “ tioned in *Pausanias’s* *Achaic’s*, in the
 “ tragical Story of *Corefus* and *Callirrhoe*,
 “ sufficiently intimate that the *Phœnician*
 “ and *Ægyptian* Priests had set up this
 “ *Dodonæan* Oracle before the Time of
 “ *Amosis*, who destroyed that barbarous
 “ Practice in *Ægypt*.”

— *Isque adytis hæc tristia dicta reportat :*
Sanguine placastis ventos, & virgine cæsa,
Cum primum Iliacas Danaï venistis ad
oras :

Sanguine quærendi reditus, animaque li-
tandum
*Argolica.**

— He from the Gods this dreadful
 Answer brought
 O Grecians, when the Trojan Shores you
 sought,
 Your Passage with a Virgin’s Blood was
 bought :
 So must your safe Return be bought again;
 And Grecian Blood once more atone the
 Main.

DRYDEN.

* VIRG. *Æneid.* II. v 115, 116, 117, 118, 119.

THESE

THESE bloody Sacrifices were, for certain, Instances of the greatest Degree of Impiety, Tyranny, and Cruelty in the World: That either wicked Dæmons, or wicked Men, who neither made, nor preserved Mankind; who had therefore no Right over them; nor were they able to make them amends in the next World, for what they thus lost or suffered in this; should, after so inhuman a Manner, command the taking away the Lives of Men, and particularly of the Offerer's own Children, without the commission of any Crime. This was, I think, an Abomination derived from him who was *a^b Murderer from the Beginning*: A Crime truly and properly *diabolical*.

(5.) THAT accordingly Almighty God himself, under the *Jewish* Dispensation, vehemently condemned the Pagans, and sometimes the *Jews* themselves for this Crime; and for it, among other heinous Sins, cast the idolatrous Nations (nay

^b John viii. 44.

sometimes the *Jews* too) out of *Palestine*.
Take the principal Texts hereto relating,
as they lye in order in the Old Testament.

• *THOU* shalt not let any of thy Seed
pass through the Fire to Molech. — Defile
not your selves in any of these Things: For
in all these the Nations are defiled, which I
cast out before you, &c.

• *WHOSOEVER* he be of the Chil-
dren of Israel, or of the Strangers that so-
journ in Israel, that giveth any of his Seed
unto Molech, he shall surely be put to Death;
the People of the Land shall stone him with
Stones.

• *TAKE* heed to thy self, that thou be not
snared by following the Nations, after that
they be destroyed from before thee; and that
thou enquire not after their Gods, saying,
How did these Nations serve their Gods, e-
ven so will I do likewise. Thou shalt not do
so unto the Lord thy God: for every Abomi-
nation of the Lord, which he hateth, have

• Levit. xviii. 21.
30, 31.

• Levit. xx. 2.

• Deut. xii.

they done unto their Gods: for even their Sons and their Daughters have they burnt in the Fire to their Gods. See xviii. 10. 2 King xvii. 17.

^f AND Abaz made his Son to pass through the Fire, according to the Abominations of the Heathen, whom the Lord cast out before the Children of Israel.

^g MOREOVER Abaz burnt Incense in the Valley of the Son of Hinnom; and burnt his Children [his Son, in Josephus] in the Fire, after the Abominations of the Heathen, whom the Lord had cast out before the Children of Israel.

^h AND the Sepharvites burnt their Children in the Fire to Adrammelech, and Anammelech, the Gods of Sepharvaim, &c.

ⁱ AND Josiah defiled Topheth, which is in the Valley of the Children of Hinnom, that no Man might make his Son or his Daughter to pass through the Fire unto Molech.

^f 2 King. xvi. 3.
xvii. 31.

^g 2 Chron. xxviii. 3.
ⁱ Ibid. xxiii. 10.

^h 2 King.

^k Yea they sacrificed their Sons and their Daughters unto Dæmons. And shed innocent Blood, the Blood of their Sons and of their Daughters, whom they sacrificed unto the Idols of Canaan: And the Land was polluted with Blood. See II. lvii. 5.

^l The Children of Judah have done evil in my sight, saith the Lord; they have set their Abominations in the House which is called by my Name, to pollute it. And they have built the high Places of Tophet, which is in the Valley of the Son of Hinnom, to burn their Sons and their Daughters in the Fire; which I commanded them not, nor came it into my Heart.

^m Thus saith the Lord of Hosts, the God of Israel, Behold I will bring evil upon this Place; the which whosoever beareth his Ears shall tingle. Because they have forsaken me, and have estranged this Place, and have burnt Incense unto other Gods, whom neither they nor their Fathers have known, nor

^k Pf. cvi. 37, 38.

xix. 3, 4, 5.

^l Jer. vii, 30, 31, 32.

^m Ibid.

the Kings of Judah; and have filled this Place with the Blood of Innocents. They have built also the high Places of Baal, to burn their Sons with Fire for Burnt-Offerings unto Baal: which I commanded not, nor spake it, neither came it into my Mind: &c.

“THEY built the high Places of Baal, which are in the Valley of the Son of Hinnom, to cause their Sons and their Daughters to pass through the Fire unto Molech: which I commanded them not, neither came it into my Mind, that they should do this Abomination, to cause Judah to sin.

“MOREOVER thou hast taken thy Sons and thy Daughters, whom thou hast born unto me; and these hast thou sacrificed unto them, to be devoured. Is this of thy Whoredoms a small Matter, that thou hast slain my Children, and delivered them to cause them to pass through the Fire for them? See ch. xx. 26. 1 Cor. x. 20.

“THOU hatedst the old Inhabitants of

*“ Jer. xxxii. 35.
xii. 4, 5, 6.*

“ Ezek. xvi. 20, 21.

“ Wild.

thy holy Land, for doing most odious Works of Witchcrafts, and wicked Sacrifices: And also those merciless murderers of Children, and devourers of Man's Flesh; and Feasts of Blood: With their Priests, out of the midst of their idolatrous Crew: And the Parents that killed with their own Hands Souls destitute of help.

(6.) That Almighty God never permitted, in any one instance, that such a human Sacrifice should actually be offered to himself, (tho' he had a Right to have required it, if he had so pleased) under the whole *Jewish* Dispensation; which yet was full of many other kinds of Sacrifices; and this at a Time when Mankind generally thought such Sacrifices of the greatest Virtue for the procuring Pardon of Sin, and the divine Favour. This the ancient Records of the Heathen World attest. Take their Notion in the Words of *Philo Byblius*, the Translator of *Sancho-niatbo*. " ⁹ It was the Custom of the Ancients, in the greatest Calamities and

⁹ Ap. Marth. p 76, 77.

“ Dangers, for the Governours of the City
 “ or Nation, in order to avert the Destru-
 “ ction of all, to devote their beloved
 “ Son to be slain, as a Price of Redemp-
 “ tion to the punishing [*or avenging*] Dæ-
 “ mons; and those so devoted were killed
 “ after a mystical Manner.” This the
 History of the King of *Moab**, when he
 was in great Distress in his War against
Israel and *Judah*, informs us of: Who
 then took his eldest Son, that should have
 reigned in his stead, and offered him for a
 Burnt-Offering upon the City Wall. This
 also the Jewish Prophet *Micah*† implies,
 when he enquires, *Wherewith shall I come*
before the Lord, and bow my self before the
Higb God? Shall I come before him with
Burnt-Offerings; with Calves of a Year
old? Will the Lord be pleased with thousands
of Rams, with ten thousands of fat Kids of
the Goats? Shall I give my First Born for
my Transgression, the Fruit of my Body, for
the Sin of my Soul? No certainly, For He
hath shewed thee, O Man, what is good;
and what doth the Lord require of thee,

* 2 King. iii. 27.

† M'c. vi. 6, 7, 8.

but to do justly; and to love mercy; and to humble thy self to walk with thy God?

• 'Tis true, God did here try the Faith and Obedience of *Abraham* to himself; whether they were as strong as the *Pagans* exhibited to their *Dæmons* or Idols. Yet did he withal take effectual Care, and that by a miraculous Interposition also, to prevent the Execution; and provided himself a Ram, as a vicarious Substitute, to supply the Place of *Isaac* immediately. " *And the Angel of the Lord called unto Abraham, and said, Abraham, Abraham; and he said, Here am I. And he said, Lay not thine Hand upon the Lad, neither do thou any thing unto him. For now I know that thou fearest God, seeing thou hast not withheld thy Son, thine only Son from me. And Abraham lifted up his Eyes and looked, and behold a Ram caught in a Thicket by his Horns. And Abraham went and took the Ram, and offered him up for a Burnt-Offering, in the stead of his Son. Thus tho' Jephtha^x has, by many, been thought to have vow'd to Offer up his only Daughter*

^v Gen. xxii. 11, 12, 13.

^x Judg. xi. 36—39.

and

and Child as a Sacrifice; and that as bound on him, upon Supposition of his Vow, by a Divine Law; *Levit. xxvii. 28, 29.* of which Opinion I was once my self; yet upon more mature Consideration I have, for some Time, thought this to be a Mistake; and that his Vow extended only to her being devoted to serve God at the Tabernacle, or elsewhere, in a State of perpetual Virginity; and that neither that Law did enjoin any human Sacrifices, nor do we meet with any Example of its Execution in this Sense afterwards. *Philo* never mentions any such Law, no more than *Josephus*. And when *Josephus* thought that *Jephtha* had made such a Vow, and executed it, he is yet so far from hinting at its being done in compliance with any Law of God, that he expressly condemns him for it, as having acted contrary thereto; or, in his own Words, “as having offered an Oblation neither conformable to the Law, nor acceptable to God; nor weighing with himself what Opinion the Hearers would have of such a Practice.”

^a Antiq. V. 7—10.

(7.) THAT *Isaac* being at this Time according to *Josephus*², who is herein justly followed by Archbishop *Usher*³, no less than twenty five Years of Age, and *Abraham* being, by consequence, one hundred twenty five. It is not to be supposed that *Abraham* could bind *Isaac*, in order to offer him in Sacrifice, but by his own free Consent; which free Consent of the Party who is to suffer seems absolutely necessary in all such Cases; and which free Consent *St. Clement*, as well as *Josephus*, distinctly take Notice of on this Occasion. *St. Clement* describes it thus, “^b *Isaac* being fully persuaded of what he knew was to come, cheerfully yielded himself up for a Sacrifice.”

And for *Josephus*^c, after introducing *Abraham*, in a pathetick Speech, laying before *Isaac* the divine Command; and exhorting him patiently and joyfully to submit to it, he tells us, that *Isaac* very cheerfully consented; and then introduces

² Antiq. I. 11. 2. and 12. 2. and 13. 2. ³ Ush. An-
nal. ad A. M. 2133. ^b 1 Clem. § 31. ^c Antiq. I. 13. 3.
him

him in a short, but very pious Answer, acquiescing in the Proposal, and adds, that *he then immediately and readily went to the Altar to be sacrificed.*

NOR did *Jephtha* ^d perform his rash Vow, whatever it were, till his Daughter had given her Consent to it.

(8) IT appears to me, that *Abraham* never despair'd entirely of the Interposition of Providence for the Preservation of *Isaac*; although, in Obedience to the Command, he prepared to sacrifice him to God. This seems to me intimated in *Abraham's* Words to his Servants, on the third Day, when he was in Sight of the Mountain on which he was to offer his Son *Isaac*. * *We will go, and worship, and we will come again to you.* As also in his Answer to his Son, when he enquired, *Behold the Fire and the Wood:* † *But where is the Lamb for a Burnt-Offering?* And * *Abraham said, My Son, God will provide himself a Lamb for a Burnt-Offering.* Both

^d Judg. xi. 36, 37.

* Gen. xxii. 5.

† † 7.

these Passages look to me somewhat like such an Expectation. However

(9) It appears most evident, that *Abraham*, and I suppose *Isaac* also, firmly believed, that if God should permit *Isaac* to be actually slain, as a Sacrifice, he would certainly and speedily raise him again from the Dead. This, to be sure, is supposed in the Words already quoted, that both *he and his Son would go and worship and come again to the Servants*; and is clearly and justly collected from this History by the Author to the *Hebrews*, ch. xi, 17, 18, 19. By Faith *Abraham when he was tryed offered up Isaac*; and he that had received the Promises offered up his only begotten: of whom it was said, that in *Isaac shall thy Seed be called*: accounting, or reasoning, λογισάμενος, that God was able to raise him from the Dead. And this Reasoning was at once very obvious, and wholly undeniable: That since God was Truth itself, and had over and over promised that he would multiply *Abra-*

ham exceedingly; that ^h he should be a Father of many Nations; that his Name should be no longer Abram, but Abraham; because a Father of many Nations God had made him, &c. that ⁱ Sarai his Wife should be called Sarah; that ^k he would bless her, and give Abraham a Son also of her; and that he would bless him; and she should become Nations, and Kings of People should be of her, &c. and that ^l in Isaac should his Seed be called. And since withal it is here supposed, that Isaac was to be slain, as a Sacrifice, before he was married, or had any Seed, God was, for certain, obliged by his Promises, in these Circumstances, to raise Isaac again from the Dead. And this was an eminent Instance of that Faith, whereby ^m Abraham believed God, and it was imputed to him for Righteousness: viz. That if God should permit Isaac to be sacrificed, he would certainly and quickly raise him up again from the Dead; ⁿ from whence also he received him in

^h Gen. xvii. 4, 5, 6,

^k Ver. 15.

^l Ver. 16.

^m Gen. xxi. 13. See Rom. ix. 7, 8.

ⁿ Gen. xv. 6.

^o Heb. xi. 19.

a *Figure* ; as the Author to the *Hebrews* here justly observes.

(10.) THAT the firm and just Foundation of *Abraham's* Faith and Assurance in God for such a Resurrection was this, besides the general Consideration of the divine Veracity, that during the whole Time of his sojourning in strange Countries, in *Canaan* and *Egypt*, ever since he had been called out of *Chaldea* or *Mesopotamia* at seventy five Years of Age, he had ° had constant Experience of a special, of an over-ruling, of a kind and gracious Providence over him, till this his 125th Year : Which against all human Views had continually blessed him, and enriched him ; and, in his elder Age, had given him first *Ishmael* by *Hagar* ; and afterward promised him *Isaac* to ^p spring from his own Body now dead, ^q and from the deadness of *Sarah's* Womb ; when she was past Age, and when it ceased to be with *Sarah* after the manner of *Women**, and had actually performed that and every other

° Gen. xii. 4.

p Rom. iv. 19.

q Heb. xi. 11.

* Gen. xviii. 11.

Promise

Promise, how improbable soever that Performance had appear'd, he had ever made to him; and this during fifty intire Years together. So that altho' at his first Exit out of *Chaldea* or *Mesopotamia*, he might have been tempt'd to stagger at such a *Promise of God through Unbeliefⁿ*; yet might he now, after fifty Years constant Experience, be justly *strong in Faith*, giving *Glory to God*; as ° *being fully persuaded, that what God had promised, the Resurrection of Isaac, he was both able and willing to perform.*

(II.) THAT this Assurance therefore, that God, if he permitted *Isaac* to be slain, would infallibly raise him again from the Dead, intirely alters the State of the Case of *Abraham's* Sacrificing *Isaac* to the true God, from that of all other human Sacrifices whatsoever offered to false ones. All those others being done without the least Promise or Prospect of such a Resurrection. And this indeed takes away all pretence of Injustice in the Divine Command;

in Rom. iv. 20. ° ver. 21.

as well as of all Inhumanity or Cruelty in *Abraham's* Obedience to it.

(12.) THAT, upon the whole, this Command to *Abraham*, and what followed upon it, looks so very like an Intention in God to typify or represent before-hand in *Isaac*, a beloved or only begotten Son, what was to happen long afterward to the great Son and Seed of *Abraham*, the *Messiah*, the beloved and the only Begotten of the Father, whose Day *Abraham* saw by Faith before-hand, and rejoiced to see it ^P: viz. that He, by the determinate Counsel and Fore-knowledge of God should be Crucified, and Slain^q, as a Sacrifice, and should be raised again the third Day; and this at *Jerusalem* also; and that in the mean Time, God would accept of the Sacrifices of Rams, and the like Animals at the same City *Jerusalem*, that one cannot easily avoid the Application. This seems the Reason, Why *Abraham* was obliged to go to the Land of *Moriah*^r, or *Jerusalem*; and why it is noted, that it was the third Day^s that he came to the Place; which implies that the return

^P Joh. viii. 56. ^q Act. ii. 33. ^r Gen. xxii. 2. ^s v. 4.
back,

back, after the Slaying of the Sacrifice, would naturally be *the third Day* also; and why this Sacrifice was not *Ishmael the Son of the Flesh* only, but *Isaac the Son by Promise*^t, the *beloved Son of Abraham*, and why *Isaac* was stiled the *only Son*^u, or *only begotten Son*^x of *Abraham*, tho' he had *Ishmael* besides; and why *Isaac* himself was to *bear the Wood*^y on which he was to be sacrificed^z: and why the Place was no other^a than *the Land of Moriah* or *Vision*^b; i. e. most probably a Place where the *Shecinah* or *Messiah* had been *seen*, and God by him worshipped, even before the Days of *Abraham*; and where lately lived, and perhaps now lived *Melchisedek*, the grand Type of the *Messiah*, (who might then possibly be present at the Sacrifice,) and why this Sacrifice was to be offered either on the Mountain called afterward distinctly *Moriah*, where the Temple stood, and where all the *Mosaick* Sacrifices were afterward to be offered; as *Josephus*^c and the generality suppose; or perhaps, as others suppose, that where the *Messiah* himself was

^t ver. 2. ^u *ibid.* ^x Heb. xi. 17. ^y Gen. xxii. 6.

^z Luk. xxiii. 26. ^a Joh. i. 17. ^b Gen. xxii. 2. ^c Antiq. L. 13. 2. VII. 13. 4.

to be offered, its Neighbour Mount *Calvary*. This seems also the Reason why the *Ram*^d was substituted, as a vicarious Sacrifice, instead of *Isaac*. These Circumstances seem to me very peculiar and extraordinary, and to render the present *Hypothesis* extremely probable. Nor perhaps did St. *Clement* mean any thing else, when, in his fore-cited Passage, he says, that "*Isaac* was fully persuaded of what he "*knew* was to come," and therefore, "*cheerfully* yielded himself up for a Sa- "*crifice*." Nor indeed does that Name of this Place, *Jehovah Jireh*^e, which continued till the Days of *Moses*, and signified, *God will see*, or rather *God will provide*, seem to be given it by *Abraham*, on any other Account, than that *God* would there, in the fullness of Time^f, *provide himself a Lamb* (that^g *Lamb of God* which *was to take away the Sin of the World*) *for a Burnt-Offering*.

BUT now if, after all, it be objected, that how peculiar and how typical soever the Circumstances of *Abraham* and *Isaac*

^d ver. 13.

^e ver. 14.

^f ver. 8.

^g Joh. i, 29.

might

might be in themselves, of which the *Heathens* about them could have little Notion; yet such a Divine Command to *Abraham* for slaying his beloved Son *Isaac*, must however be of very ill Example to the Gentile World; and that it probably did either first Occasion; or at least greatly Encourage their wicked Practices in offering their Children for Sacrifices to their Idols; I answer by the next Consideration;

(13.) THAT this Objection is so far from Truth, that God's publick and miraculous Prohibition of the Execution of this Command to *Abraham*, (which Command it self the *Gentiles* would not then at all be surprized at; because it was so like to their own usual Practices;) As well as God's Substitution of a vicarious Oblation, seem to have been the very Occasions of the immediate *Abolition* of those impious Sacrifices by *Tethmosis* or *Amosis*, among the neighbouring *Egyptians*, and of the Substitution of more inoffensive ones there instead of them. Take the Account of this *Abolition*, which we shall presently prove was about the Time of *Abraham's*

ham's Offering up his Son *Isaac*, as it is
 preserved by *Porphyry*, from *Manetho*, the
 famous *Egyptian* Historian and Chrono-
 loger; which is also cited from *Porphyry*,
 by *Eusebius* and *Theodorit*. " *h* *Amosis*, says
 " *Porphyry*, abolished the Law for slaying of
 " Men, in *Heliopolis* of *Egypt*; as *Mane-*
 " *tho* bears Witness, in his Book of *Anti-*
 " *quity and Piety*. They were sacrificed
 " to *Juno*, and were examined, as were the
 " pure Calves, that were also sealed with
 " them: they were sacrificed three in a
 " Day. In whose stead *Amosis* command-
 " ed that Men of Wax, of the same Num-
 " ber, should be substituted. [Of other
 " Substitutions long afterwards, in other
 " Countries. See *Marsh*. pag. 303, 304.]

Now I have lately shewn, that these *E-*
gyptians had *Abraham* in great Veneration,
 and that *all the Wisdom* of those *Egyptians*,
in which Moses was afterward learnedⁱ, was
 derived from no other than from *Abra-*
ham. Now it appears evidently by the
 fore-cited Passage, that the first *Abolition*
 of these Human Sacrifices, and the Substi-

^h *Marsh*. p. 301. ⁱ *Dissert.* iv. Prop. III. pag. 211, 212, 213.
 tutiōn

tution of waxen Images in their stead, and this particularly at *Heliopolis*, in the North-East Part of *Egypt*, in the Neighbourhood of *Beersheba*, in the South of *Palestine*, where *Abraham* now lived^k, at the Distance of about a hundred and twenty Miles only; was in the Days, and by the Order of *Tetbmosis* or *Amosis*, who was the first of the *Egyptian* Kings, after the Expulsion of the *Phœnician* Shepherds. Now therefore we are to enquire when this *Tetbmosis* or *Amosis* lived, and compare his Time with the Time of the Sacrifice of *Isaac*. Now if we look into my Chronological Table, published *A. D.* 1721. We shall find that the hundred twenty fifth Year of *Abraham*, or, which is all one, the twenty fifth of *Isaac*, falls into *A. M.* 2573, or into the thirteenth Year of *Tetbmosis* or *Amosis*: Which is the very middle of his twenty five Years Reign. So that this Abolition of human Sacrifices in *Egypt*, and Substitution of others in their room, seems to have been occasion'd by the solemn Prohibition of such a Sacrifice in the Case of *Abraham*; and by the following Substitution of a *Ram*

^k Gen. xxi. 31, 33. xxii. 19.

(40)
in its stead. Which Account of this matter, not only takes away the groundless Suspensions of the Moderns; but shews the great Seasonableness of the Divine Prohibition of the Execution of this Command to *Abraham*, as probably the direct Occasion of putting a Stop to the Barbarity of the *Egyptians* in offering Human Sacrifices, and that for many, if not for all Generations afterwards. See Bp. Cumberland's *Sancho-niatho*, pag. 134 — 150.

July 10, 1734.

WILL. WHISTON.

F I N I S.

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